

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAJ-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06

SIL-01 DRC-01 /156 W

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R 082047Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5442

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

UNCLAS LONDON 13095

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH BY-ELECTIONS, NOVEMBER 8

1. SUMMARY: BY-ELECTIONS ARE TAKING PLACE TODAY FOR FOUR PARLIAMENTARY SEATS, THREE HELD BY THE CONSERVATIVES AND ONE BY LABOR. THE LIBERALS NEED TO TAKE AT LEAST ONE OF THE SEATS TO KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM OF THEIR REVIVAL. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE LOOKING ANXIOUSLY BUT NONE TOO HOPEFULLY FOR SOME SIGN THAT VOTER DISSATISFACTION HAS PEAKED. ITS OVERALL MAJORITY IN THE COMMONS, CURRENTLY SIXTEEN, WILL REST BETWEEN TWELVE AND EIGHTEEN, DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF TODAY'S VOTING. END SUMMARY

2. FOUR PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTIONS, THE FIRST SINCE THE LIBERALS'

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SPECTACULAR TWIN VICTORIES IN JULY, ARE BEING HELD TODAY. THE

CONTESTS ARE A MIXED LOT; HERE ARE THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF EACH:

3. BERWICK-UPON-TWEED - THIS SEAT HAS BEEN VACANT SINCE LORD LAMBTON'S RESIGNATION LAST MAY. THE LIBERALS ARE FAVORED TO WIN ALTHOUGH THEIR CANDIDATE RAN THIRD AND POLLED ONLY 22 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AT THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION. (THE CONSERVATIVES POLLED 51 PERCENT.) IT WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE LIBERALS TO OVERCOME THIS MARGIN. NONETHELESS, IT IS A MEASURE OF THE EXPECTATIONS AROUSED BY THEIR RECENT SUCCESSES THAT ANYTHING LESS THAN VICTORY WILL BE REGARDED AS A SERIOUS SETBACK TO THEIR GENERAL REVIVAL.

4. HOVE - THIS SEASIDE RESORT WITH ITS HIGH PROPORTION OF MIDDLE-CLASS OLD-AGE PENSIONERS HAS LONG BEEN ONE OF THE SAFEST TORY SEATS IN THE COUNTRY. IN A STRAIGHT TWO-WAY FIGHT WITH LABOR AT THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION, THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE POLLED 69 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. THE LIBERALS, WHO DID NOT EVEN CONTEST THE SEAT IN 1970, HAVE MOUNTED A MAJOR CAMPAIGN AND ARE EXPECTED TO COMPILE AN IMPRESSIVE VOTE. THE GOVERNMENT'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY IS LIKELY TO COST THE CONSERVATIVES SOME JEWISH VOTES, AND A NATIONAL FRONT CANDIDATE WILL SIPHON OFF SOME RIGHT-WING VOTES. NONETHELESS, THE LATEST POLLS INDICATE THE CONSERVATIVES WILL HOLD HOVE. ANY OTHER OUTCOME WOULD BE AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

5. EDINBURGH NORTH - THIS THIRD CONSERVATIVE SEAT IS UNDER SIEGE FROM LABOR, LIBERALS, AND SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS ALIKE. ALL OF THEM FANCY THEIR OWN CHANCES, BUT BARRING A GREAT UPSET, THE ENERGETIC CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE SHOULD RETAIN ENOUGH OF HIS PREDECESSOR'S SUPPORT (53 PERCENT IN 1970) TO SQUEAK HOME.

6. GLASGOW GOVAN - TO DEFEND THIS WORKING CLASS STRONGHOLD (60 PERCENT IN 1970), LABOR HAS SELECTED AN ARDENTLY LEFTIST, 60-YEAR OLD PARTY HACK. HIS STRONGEST CHALLENGE IS EXPECTED TO COME FROM THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS. THE LIBERAL EFFORT NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND, AND THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE NO CHANCE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON13095
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731147/aaaabiin.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: willialc
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08-Aug-2001 by maustmc>; APPROVED <20-Aug-2001 by willialc>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH BY-ELECTIONS, NOVEMBER 8
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005